



April 11, 2007

Dear Metal and Nonmetal Mine Operators and Contractors:

I am writing today to make you aware of a disturbing upward trend of fatalities in the metal and nonmetal mining industry. Over the last three weeks, four fatalities have occurred in metal and nonmetal mining workplaces, making seven total for the year. This is clearly an immediate and urgent call for all of us to look at safety and health practices and "STOP the Fatalities."

Beginning the week of April 16, I ask that all mine operators take a brief time-out to meet with employees and contractors to go over the recent accidents and discuss practical preventative measures. Everyone should be encouraged to identify and report possible hazards immediately to management as well as take proactive steps to control or eliminate them. Active, open communication relating to prompt control of workplace hazards will serve as a foundation to build an effective safety process at every mine.

During this time-out, I would also ask that everyone take a moment to focus on the tragic consequences of these recent deaths – for the families, for friends, and for the industry. We ask each person in the mining community to stop, focus on safety and ask what he or she can do to stop a fatality. Safety is never easy, but the penalty for failing to work safely can be extraordinarily high for everyone.

MSHA will do its part to help you get the word out to miners, supervisors and contractors. MSHA's Inspectors, personnel from our Educational Field Services, and MSHA's Small Mines Office will visit mines during April to bring our "STOP the Fatalities" initiative directly to the mines. They will hand out materials that address hazard identification and reporting, safety gear use, job planning, job set up, job procedures, and tool choice.

In addition, MSHA will provide operators with technical help investigating root causes of accidents, including communications issues, human factors, and supervisory procedures.

Please discuss the enclosed information and reference materials about hazard recognition with your employees. This safety emphasis uses real incidents to capture the attention of all employees and remind them that hazards are real and can lead to accidents while they are working. We want to involve every employee in making good decisions which will prevent accidents and result in a safer workplace.

The information is also posted on the "STOP the Fatalities" page on MSHA's website at www.msha.gov.

Detailed information on each mining fatality is available on the MSHA website under 2007 Fatalgrams and Fatal Investigation Reports Metal and Nonmetal Mines available at <http://www.msha.gov/fatals/fabm2007.asp> .

With your cooperation, we can reach every employee in our nation's metal and nonmetal mines. Working together, we can "STOP the Fatalities."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Richard E. Stickler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard E. Stickler
Assistant Secretary for
Mine Safety and Health

Enclosures